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## **A Discussion on New York City and Its Future: A Conversation with New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn**

CHRISTINE C. QUINN

*New York City Council Speaker, 2013*

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CHRISTINE C. QUINN

## A Discussion on New York City and Its Future: A Conversation with New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is an edited version of remarks Speaker Quinn delivered on February 15, 2013, at the CityLaw Breakfast Series hosted by the Center for New York City Law at New York Law School. Her remarks were followed by a question and answer dialogue with attendees. The video of her full address is available at <http://nyls.mediasite.com/mediasite/Play/d47c8fdb5fb64efe9f435ea17c1f4ec21d>. The citations to some of the information referenced by Speaker Quinn in her remarks were provided by the *New York Law School Law Review*.

## A CONVERSATION WITH NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL SPEAKER CHRISTINE QUINN

*Introduction of New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn  
By Ross Sandler, Professor of Law and Director of the Center for  
New York City Law at New York Law School:*

*I am delighted to welcome Christine Quinn to New York Law School. This is the second time she has come to New York Law School to speak. She first spoke here in 2008, and now, as the 2013 election season heats up, we are pleased that she is back. Christine Quinn was elected to the New York City Council in 1999 and became the Speaker in 2006. I participated in government, as many of you did, back when the Board of Estimate was around and I saw the 1989 Charter Revision Commission eliminate the Board of Estimate and create a strong Council. I remember distinctly that the issues, at that time, were how strong the Council would be and what kind of a counterweight it would be to a strong Mayor. Those were profoundly difficult issues that were wrestled with at that time. But now, looking back, the years that have passed have allowed us to see just how the Council and its leadership have matured. A key person, perhaps the most important person in that period of time, has been Christine Quinn. She has led a diverse Council, a Council that had to deal with a very strong Mayor, through her conciliation, leadership, legislation, and ability to bring people together. I cite only one example of that leadership: in her wonderful State of the City speech on February 11, 2013, she mentioned thirty other members of the City Council. In other words, what she did reflects the collegial government that she has led and that has been part of the strength that she has brought to the Council. It is an important leadership quality and we are delighted to welcome Christine Quinn to the New York Law School podium.*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Ross, thank you very much. I was just reminiscing on the way here about when I first was elected to the City Council in 1999, when we had a big problem in the neighborhood about a renegade tour bus company. It really had become an enormous problem. This company was running bad depots right next to people's homes; they were not following the rules of the road. A man was killed, hit by a tour bus over by Manhattan Plaza, and we just could not break through.

The court appointed a special magistrate to help us figure it out. (If I say any of the legal terms incorrectly, just ignore me and see Rob Newman or Liz Fine from my office later, our Legislative Director and General Counsel, respectively. They can fill you in on exactly what I meant in a legal perspective.) Ross Sandler was that individual who met endlessly with me, Tom Duane, Dick Gottfried, Scott Stringer, and other folks to try to resolve this issue. So I feel I can never say no to Ross when he asks me to do something because he was such a huge help to us on the West Side.

But he did just remind me that I told him exactly how he was supposed to fix it for the West Side, and I cannot imagine I was that pushy.

It is great to still have Anthony Crowell downtown; he was a terrific, terrific resource for us and the City Council as we worked on complicated issues like lobbying laws and campaign finance reform. He was a great partner to us, and so it is great having him still here in downtown Manhattan.<sup>1</sup> Our Council Minority Leader, Jimmy Oddo, went to New York Law School for his J.D., and a lot of folks in government have been able to get law degrees while going to school at night at New York Law School and still working. This school is a great resource for all of us at City Hall. So I just want to thank Dean Anthony Crowell and everybody here for that. I want to particularly mention and applaud Anthony's work in launching a new public service scholarship program and a new Center for Business and Financial Services Law at New York Law School. His efforts to grow this institution into an even stronger, better place, and give folks the opportunity to receive law degrees while working, is something to be commended.

## II. HOMELESS POLICY, RULEMAKING, AND THE BALANCE OF POWERS

I hate to start on an antagonistic topic after that lovely introduction, but I do want to pat the Council on the back a little bit because we had an important victory yesterday in the courts as it relates to our challenge to Mayor Bloomberg's homeless policy.<sup>2</sup>

Let me first just say that one of the things that I have tried to do in the past seven years is to get as much done as we could possibly get done. And if you are going to get things done in government, that means the legislature and the executive have to work together. But it also means that when you *cannot* work together, you have to do so agreeably.

About a year ago, we did something fairly unorthodox by taking Mayor Bloomberg to court over his homeless policy. Somebody asked me at one point what that meant about my relationship with the Mayor. I said, "Nothing; we're not dating." It simply means we disagree on homeless policy. I remember telling the Mayor that story and he laughed because he understood you cannot agree on everything. As long as you actually feel strongly about what it is that you disagree on, and do so agreeably, you can continue to work collaboratively and go from that one room where you disagreed into the next room where you are going to agree.

This issue was one where the New York City Department of Homeless Services wanted to extend a policy that Mayor Giuliani had put in place around screening homeless families in a manner that I thought, when Giuliani did it, was mean-

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1. Anthony W. Crowell became New York Law School's sixteenth Dean and President on May 22, 2012. Prior to his appointment, Dean Crowell served as Counselor to New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. In this role, he served as counsel and senior management and policy advisor to the Mayor, as well as General Counsel to the Office of the Mayor. For more information see N.Y.L. SCH. FACULTY PROFILES, [http://www.nyls.edu/faculty/faculty\\_profiles/anthony\\_w\\_crowell](http://www.nyls.edu/faculty/faculty_profiles/anthony_w_crowell).

2. Callahan v. Carey, 959 N.Y.S.2d 427 (1st Dep't 2013).

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spirited, overly aggressive, and counterproductive.<sup>3</sup> Under the Giuliani policy,<sup>4</sup> the vast majority of families who were rejected from a shelter because they did not “prove that they had nowhere else to go” actually reapplied and ended up coming right back. So all the policy did was delay their entry into the shelter system and, clearly, put them in a worse place.

For us in the Council, the issue was more specific in that we believe that when the Department of Homeless Services wanted to apply this same rule to homeless single adults it needed to go through the rulemaking process as required by the Citywide Administrative Procedure Act (CAPA), which governs how New York City agencies make rules. The process of rulemaking is extremely important to us in the Council because we often, in legislation, will say that something has to be implemented through an agency’s rulemaking process. So if an agency is not holding rulemaking to the highest level of transparency and the letter of the law, it undercuts our ability as a legislature to write laws. We write laws with the expectation that the agency is going to implement them as prescribed under the provisions of the CAPA.<sup>5</sup>

The Department did not follow the CAPA with regard to this particular policy. Now, the Coalition for the Homeless and Legal Aid Society will tell you this is a violation of the *Callahan* decision.<sup>6</sup> I agree with that and I share their substantive concerns. But for us, it was about rulemaking. Yesterday, the First Appellate Division ruled unanimously that, in fact, we were right, that the Mayor’s office had violated the rulemaking provisions of the CAPA and, therefore, could not implement this new policy.<sup>7</sup>

From my perspective, the case is a very significant victory for homeless families. But it was also an important victory for the balance of power in a democracy, in that government has to be conducted in an open and transparent way.<sup>8</sup>

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3. *Homelessness and Ways to Address It in New York State: Hearing Before the N.Y. State Assembly Comm. on Social Servs.* (Jan. 25, 2005) (testimony of Shelly Nortz, Exec. Dir. for Policy, Coal. for the Homeless), available at [http://coalhome.3cdn.net/81f327a9beb5f7c18d\\_hqm6bnagz.pdf](http://coalhome.3cdn.net/81f327a9beb5f7c18d_hqm6bnagz.pdf).

4. N.Y. COMP. CODES R. & REGS. tit. 18, § 352.35 (1995). During Giuliani’s term as Mayor, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) shelter screening policy applied to families; during Bloomberg’s terms, a similar policy was to be applied to individuals. See Dana Rubinstein, *A Dinkins-Giuliani Aide Defends the Bloomberg Administration’s Homeless-Shelter Proposal*, CAP. N.Y. (Nov. 11, 2011, 12:30 PM), <http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/politics/2011/11/4097610/dinkins-giuliani-aide-defends-bloomberg-administrations-homeless-sh>; see also *Protecting the Legal Right to Shelter*, COAL. FOR THE HOMELESS, <http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/pages/protecting-the-legal-right-to-shelter> (last visited June 10, 2013).

5. N.Y.C. A.P.A. §§ 1043(a), 1046 (2006).

6. *Callahan v. Carey*, N.Y. L.J., Dec. 11, 1979, at 10 (Sup. Ct. N.Y. Cnty. 1979); see *Callahan v. Carey*, 12 N.Y.3d 496 (2009).

7. *Callahan v. Carey*, 959 N.Y.S.2d 427 (1st Dep’t 2013).

8. I really want to give a big thank-you to our General Counsel’s office, including Liz Fine, our General Counsel, and her chief litigator, Jeff Metzler, who actually won the case and really did a terrific job. So congratulations to Liz and Jeff.

### III. STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH, MIDDLE-CLASS SQUEEZE, AND ADULT EDUCATION

I would like, now, to turn to two other issues: a four-point plan to address the middle-class “squeeze” in New York City and our response to Hurricane Sandy.

On February 11, 2013, I gave my State of the City speech, which was my final State of the City speech as Speaker. We proposed a blueprint for focus and forward motion for the middle class in New York City and those who are aspiring and working so hard to get into the middle class.

In advance of the speech, we released a report called the *Middle Class Squeeze*, which was an analysis of the middle class in New York City.<sup>9</sup> Our report had a number of interesting findings. We found that our middle class has a 6.2% unemployment rate today. If you compare that rate to other times when we were coming out of a recession, it is a much higher unemployment rate. One of the challenges that exists is that good, middle-class, paying jobs are not as available as they used to be. Our report also showed that the cost of housing in the city is rising. As a result, in addition to having an employment challenge, we have an affordability crisis, with housing topping the list as the most expensive cost of living in New York City, and, unfortunately, child care is not so far behind. On average, New Yorkers are spending \$19,000 a year on child care.

That is why, in the speech, we laid out a four-point plan for developing what I believe would be the biggest middle-class housing program in two generations—since Mitchell Lama.<sup>10</sup> First, we must aggressively work to preserve every housing unit we have. Second, we need to bring back the 100,000 units of rental housing in this city that are on the verge of foreclosure and structural collapse. Third, we must allocate funds from the capital budget, and borrow funds for new housing construction. This is a time to responsibly borrow, given how low the interest rates are, and to redirect other unspent and unallocated money in the capital budget to this effort.

Finally, we must use property tax caps and other techniques to convert units that are at market rate to a level of affordability for the middle class. We further propose something we have never really done on this level before: making sure that a great deal of this housing becomes *permanently* affordable. We do not want to repeat the mistakes of Mitchell Lama, where, twenty or thirty years from now, New Yorkers could have their homes pulled out from under them.

To deal with the child-care challenge, we have introduced legislation in Albany to create a child-care tax credit. Right now, the tax credit basically taps out in the city at folks earning \$30,000 per year.<sup>11</sup> We need that, but that is obviously not

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9. We are using income of approximately \$65,000 to \$175,000 per year for a family of four to define middle class in New York City. See N.Y.C. COUNCIL, *THE MIDDLE CLASS SQUEEZE* (2013), available at [http://council.nyc.gov/html/action/acpdfs/middle\\_Class\\_squeeze.pdf](http://council.nyc.gov/html/action/acpdfs/middle_Class_squeeze.pdf).

10. See *About the Mitchell-Lama Housing Program*, N.Y. STATE HOMES AND CMTY. RENEWAL (Jan. 25, 2013), <http://www.nyshcr.org/Programs/Mitchell-Lama/>.

11. A household's federal adjusted gross income must be \$30,000 per year or less to be eligible for the New York City child-care tax credit. See *New York City Child Care Tax Credit: 2013 Fast Facts*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/ofe/downloads/pdf/nyc\\_child\\_care\\_tax\\_credit.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ofe/downloads/pdf/nyc_child_care_tax_credit.pdf) (last visited July 26, 2013).

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particularly helpful for most middle-class families. We would propose raising the income cap to about \$180,000 per year. If you pair that with the pre-existing state and federal tax credits, the average New Yorker could see a savings of \$2,040 after our credit goes through. This savings is a helpful amount of money for many families.

There is another issue we talked about in the speech that I really want to underscore. The issues that I just mentioned are important and we need to work for them immediately, but there is something else that is literally on a time clock. I know we were all thrilled when President Barack Obama put in place the opportunity for the “young dreamers,” as we call them, to stay in the United States. But in order for them to be able to stay, they have to be enrolled in an educational program. Now, as many people in this room know, and as New York City Deputy Chancellor of Education Kathleen Grimm and others can tell you, New York City’s adult education programs have waiting lists. It is a good thing that so many people want to go back to adult education. However, we do not have enough seats for them. There are about 16,000 New Yorkers who will face deportation if we do not create adult education opportunities for them. It’s that simple.

It is therefore important to allocate resources to adult education. That is why we are proposing to allocate \$13 million next year to expanding adult education, creating the opportunity for these immigrants to get into those adult education classes and then stay in New York City. This is not a small amount of money, but the issue is that important. If we do not do this, we will miss this opportunity and miss having those immigrants as a legal part of our city moving forward. That is an opportunity I think we all really need to seize.

#### IV. HURRICANE SANDY AND NEW YORK CITY’S RESPONSE

I would like to turn now from the State of the City to Hurricane Sandy. The City Council is halfway through the process of what, in the end, will be about a dozen oversight hearings on the city’s response to Hurricane Sandy. These hearings are important—not so that we can say that anybody did anything wrong, but because we went through a major event.

These oversight hearings are really designed—along with reports to come from the Mayor’s office—to figure out how we can respond better in the future. But we also need to remain focused—even as the months move away from Sandy—on the work that needs to be done. We are lucky that President Obama has appointed U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, from Brooklyn, to head a regional rebuild.

In the month after Hurricane Sandy, the Mayor and I re-empaneled, if you will, the Building Resiliency Task Force (BRTF) on an emergency basis and gave them a six-month charge to come back to us with an update on the city’s building code and flood standard so we can learn what we need to change.<sup>12</sup> For example, we have

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12. The BRTF came out with their recommendations in June 2013. There were about thirty recommendations related to improving building resiliency. While I cannot give specifics at this point, the task force met in committees to address specific building types, including commercial, critical (i.e., hospitals and nursing homes), and residential buildings, as well as one-to-three family homes. About two hundred experts



historically always put the boilers and the electricity in the basement, and we all understand why. Who wants to, if you are a developer, take the fourth floor, where you could rent apartments or offices, and instead put utilities there? Well, we learned that you will pay one way or the other, so maybe it is better to just plan that way.

We learned by looking at things like the Sims plant<sup>13</sup> that when you raise property up, it makes a difference and can preserve structures. We need to make those changes a permanent part of our building code. We also need to commit to actually implementing a comprehensive system of barriers around New York City, to harden the exterior of New York City. Some areas will require man-made barriers, some will need blue belts, some will use dunes, some will become oyster beds, and some places, like Fox Beach, will have to be bought out and people will not rebuild their homes. That has to happen.

Now, unlike Stamford, Connecticut, there is no one wall we can put up that is enough to protect New York City, but we can create a network of protective barriers. We also need to put better structure and redundancy into the systems that failed us during the storm. Sixteen percent of New York City's electrical power comes from overhead lines. Fifty percent of the people who were out of power during Hurricane Sandy—some for weeks on end—were people who had overhead lines. That is why we passed legislation in the Council to develop a plan that will show us how, in a prioritized fashion, we can begin to put those power lines underground.

We need to create redundancy in our gasoline and in our telecommunications systems. Immediately during the storm, AT&T and T-Mobile went to network sharing. If you had AT&T or T-Mobile, you probably had service. Verizon needs to do the same.

## V. CONCLUSION

This is some of the very important work that lies ahead for us in the weeks, months, and years to come—it is building housing for the middle class and those trying to get into it; figuring out a child-care tax credit so people who are lucky enough to have two jobs can go to work, or so that families with two jobs can go to work without worrying about being able to pay the bills or about the quality of their child care; making sure we keep New York City an immigrant city; making sure we create jobs and economic development as we talked about in the State of the City speech; and making sure we actually respond to natural disasters with as much grace and dignity and fortitude as those folks who were hit so hard by Hurricane Sandy. I want to thank all of you for being a part of the enterprise of government, and for your civic and academic involvement.

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participated. For more information, see *18 Building Resiliency Proposals at City Council*, URBAN GREEN, <http://www.urbangreencouncil.org/BuildingResiliency> (last visited July 15, 2013).

13. *Sims Municipal Recycling Facility*, N.Y.C. ECON. DEV. CORP., <http://www.nycedc.com/project/sims-municipal-recycling-facility> (last updated May 20, 2013).



**QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION**

*Question:* The most important mayoral appointment is that of Police Commissioner. You have repeatedly described Raymond Kelly as one of the best Commissioners in the country, and you have said the next Mayor will be lucky to retain Raymond Kelly. What does that say about your commitment to civil liberties? I point out that settlements against the New York City Police Department (NYPD) have reached record levels. Marijuana possession arrests and stop, question, and frisk levels have exceeded those under Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Again, what does that say about your commitment to civil liberties, your judgment, and are you going to let the bills proposed by the Coalition Communities United for Police Reform out for a vote, including a bill calling for the creation of an Inspector General? The NYPD is the only city agency without an Inspector General.

*Speaker Quinn:* So let me say a couple of different things. I believe Ray Kelly has been an outstanding Police Commissioner. I have not offered him a job and do not have any jobs to offer. I subscribe to the belief that there is a goddess out there of political hexes. If you start giving away jobs before you actually have the job, she will cast a hex on you for having too much hubris and you will lose the position.

People sometimes said to me, when I was running for Council or Speaker, who will be your Chief of Staff? You cannot even speak of those things. I will have a hex put on me. I was raised in an Irish family and my mother used to say if you took the Christmas tree down before Three Kings Day your house would be cursed for the rest of the year. There is a whole bunch of cursing and believing going on in my household.

I did not offer him the job, but I did say, and I stand by it, that the next Mayor would be lucky to keep Ray Kelly on as Police Commissioner. He has kept crime down to all-time lows. He has begun to tackle crime categories like hate crimes, domestic violence, and sexual assault that have persistently almost been impossible to take down, and he has been able to deal with challenging issues in the Police Department.

Now, I think at times this is unique in New York politics, but I believe you can think somebody is outstanding and at the same time not agree with everything they do and every way they do it. I do not believe the way the Police Department right now is implementing the practice of stop, question, and frisk is correct. I would not stop it. I would keep it as a tool in police officers' toolboxes, but I believe we have become too focused on the *quantity* of the stops and not on the *quality* of the stops. That is why we had an all-time high number of stops and an extraordinarily low number of guns, weapons, or significant contraband found in those stops. That is why we called on the Police Commissioner to make enormous and expansive changes in training around stop, question, and frisk. I am grateful that the Commissioner put changes in stop, question, and frisk training into place.

In response to people's concerns about how stop, question, and frisk has been implemented, we called on the Police Commissioner to enter into a memorandum of understanding, given to the Civilian Complaint Review Board Prosecutorial Authority, which is something we have not had since before a lawsuit brought against the Giuliani

administration. That has happened and we have seen stop, question, and frisk numbers go down.

Do I think we need more structural changes, and even tighter infrastructure around stop, question, and frisk? Yes, and we are in the midst of ongoing work in that regard. I have recently been in negotiations and discussions around the legislation and we are working towards a correct balance.

*Question:* In your speech, you mentioned infrastructure and also the middle class. What is your stance on transportation cost increases? On March 3, 2013, the tolls are going to go up to \$7.50. Right now it costs \$6.50 to go across most East River crossings. The Verrazano Bridge toll is currently at \$13.00, and it's going to go up to \$15.00 one way. If my math is correct, that is going to be \$75.00 a week, \$300.00 a month for a person traveling to Staten Island or New Jersey via the Verrazano Bridge.

*Speaker Quinn:* We really need to discuss alternatives in regards to these tolls. The prices are going up and you mentioned middle-income residents of New York City. I consider myself the middle income. I call New York City home, but each year I find it a challenge to keep up with the cost of living in New York City. A couple of days ago I read in the *New York Post* that there was an audit by the New York State Comptroller's Office that found the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has \$90 million of unaccounted funds.<sup>14</sup> This is a little disheartening to read, and in the next couple of weeks the MTA is going to increase tolls on these bridges.

Let me just add regarding the tolls: you could ask that question in a different moment and, maybe it is a moment in the future, put the words "subway fares" in there. So this is an issue, both around tolls and the other charges that New Yorkers incur from the MTA. I share your concern that costs like that for New Yorkers just seem to go up and up and up. And questions remain, on a very significant level, including questions that have been out there and not really addressed for a long time. I think the Comptroller's audit raises these questions again in a way that we have to look at real structural concerns about the MTA's budget, the MTA's funding, and where the money is going.<sup>15</sup>

I would suspect, though I don't want to speak for the MTA, that there is not a really robust effort going on to find alternatives. But there needs to be, and we need to get greater transparency and clarity within the MTA's budget and find ways to try to stop or soften these constant increases.

Indeed, the numbers you raised just around Staten Island really prohibit a Staten Islander's efforts to get to work, particularly if they may be starting out in a job where they are not making a lot of money, yet the person's hours are such that it's hard to take mass transit. There are reasons why people actually have to drive at

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14. Jennifer Fermino, *New Audit of MTA Shows \$90M in Unaccounted Funds*, N.Y. Post, Feb. 13, 2013, [http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/new\\_audit\\_of\\_mta\\_shows\\_in\\_unaccounted\\_Rox7SJpRdKRdBxrJNbHP](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/new_audit_of_mta_shows_in_unaccounted_Rox7SJpRdKRdBxrJNbHP).

15. Just a couple of years ago, there was a proposal from the MTA to stop offering MetroCards to high school students. With the Straphangers Campaign and others, we had to undertake a citywide organizing campaign to prevent that cut from going into place.

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certain times of the day. That can make it hard for somebody to take that job that maybe does not pay a lot today, but could put them on the path to a good job. So I share your concern. I, unfortunately, do not have a great answer about whether the MTA is looking at alternatives, but I do think that is something that has to be squarely on our to-do list: to hold the MTA more accountable.

*Question:* I want to thank you for your leadership on the Council, fighting massive cuts that have existed for many years, and I think one of your great achievements as Speaker has been supporting after-school programs. However, there is a concern among our after-school movement that many of the middle-income neighborhoods of New York City are not receiving any after-school programs. The eligibility rules have changed such that there is just very little money going into middle-income communities. How do we, in addition to child credit, address that problem?

*Speaker Quinn:* It is in part a question of funding, which is not an easy answer, but it is part of the answer. At times there will not be enough funding. The budget is ultimately a document of priorities, and while you always want to try to prioritize things like after-school programs and particularly programs that focus on young people, it is not always possible. I can never say, “Absolutely, we will be able to prioritize it all the time.” Honestly, we do not know what the budget realities will be. Another approach is to build greater public partnership, and to try to have a slightly more textured budget process in prioritizing these things.

Last year or the year before, there was a proposal to cut back on the Beacon Program,<sup>16</sup> and to target Beacon Program resources to lower-income neighborhoods, which is a logical approach. But one of the challenges in how that was done was that, I believe, it looked just at census-tracked information about the neighborhoods. That will not capture things like housing developments in the middle of Chelsea, large groupings of rent-protected homes, or things of that nature that would indicate there are lots of families who are not going to have the ability to pay for after-school classes.

We were able, through the budget negotiation process, to fix that, but, as we all search in government for data and indicators that show us how to prioritize, we need to understand that sometimes it is a little more than the numbers and you need to get to the facts beneath those numbers. That is the good thing about a public budget process. There are opportunities for folks like you to say, “I get it, but you missed this.” That is a good thing, and that is why you have give-and-take and back-and-forth and, hopefully in the end, you get it close to right.

*Question:* You brought up the issue of increasing the affordable housing in New York City. Presently there are over a half million people who live in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) housing, which New York City and New York State do not provide any funding for. How would you address the problems of NYCHA and continue the housing for over a half million New Yorkers?

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16. See THE BEACON PROGRAM, <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/afterschool/beacon> (last visited June 28, 2013).

*Speaker Quinn:* There are enormous problems at NYCHA and some of those problems have, really through the good work of the *New York Daily News*, been coming front and center, which I think is a great thing. When you have systems like \$5 million worth of warehouses and supplies and then a \$5 million contract to oversee those, there is a problem with the numbers, right? You do not have to be an accountant to recognize that. Or when you have supplies that are just not even inventoried and they are going bad because you do not know when they expire, that is ridiculous. Or when you have situations like Hurricane Sandy, when you cannot even get an answer on what is wrong structurally before you can fix it, that is an enormous problem.<sup>17</sup>

Now I think there is another problem. It is funding. Does NYCHA need more funding? Yes, but NYCHA is not even using all the funding it has, in my opinion, accurately, effectively, or even drawing it down. There is, by some accountings, a significant amount of federal money that NYCHA could have accessed that is still in Washington and other money that is still within NYCHA's own budget.

These are problems and it is part of the reason why I think we need to explore the idea of something like a school construction authority-type model for NYCHA; separate the construction rehabilitation part of what needs to get done so management can focus on structural management and day-to-day issues. It is something we are working out with Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF),<sup>18</sup> specifically Metro IAF New York, to look at how we could develop a model.

Last year in the budget, we allocated \$10 million to help NYCHA deal with its work-order backlog and to help get more work done more quickly, with the caveat that the money had to be used to train and hire NYCHA residents to do the work. It was an opportunity to give more resources and to get NYCHA residents working. Most of those jobs resulted in union jobs with the Teamsters 237.

So I think there is a lot of work to get done. We need really focused management, and I think NYCHA is in a state that none of us are satisfied with. But there is an opportunity to make it better, and we can bring NYCHA housing up to the quality it should be.

Part of the point here is people pay rent every day in NYCHA. They should get what they are paying for. They should get quality places to live, and I think there is no reason why we cannot get NYCHA to provide that. Yes, we need more money. Yes, we need to advocate for that in Washington. Yes, we need to push for that when we have city resources and when we have state resources, but there is no reason to say we

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17. See Greg B. Smith, *City Housing Authority Canceled Large Part of Its Repair Orders Backlog; Pace Has Picked Up Since Hurricane Sandy*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, May. 5, 2013, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nycha-canceled-large-portion-backlogged-repair-orders-article-1.1335299#ixzz2VsDULWTF>; Greg B. Smith, *City Council Speaker Christine Quinn to Propose NYCHA Fixes*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, Jan. 24, 2013, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/city-council-eyes-nycha-reforms-article-1.1247382#ixzz2VsBAHZ8d>; Greg B. Smith, *Where NYCHA's Millions Go to Die: Housing Authority Owns Tons of Supplies Sitting Unused in Storehouses Across City*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, Aug. 12, 2012, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nycha-millions-die-housing-authority-owns-tons-supplies-sitting-unused-storehouses-city-article-1.1134631>.

18. INDUS. AREAS FOUND., <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/> (last visited Aug. 1, 2013).

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cannot improve it. We are not going to wait until we get that money because I believe there are structural and management changes that can help us start to turn the corner.

*Question:* I am with a real estate consulting firm and my questions have to do with economic development, especially in relation to our city being competitive as a global city. I am interested in hearing about the industries you are interested in attracting to and retaining in New York City and if there are particular industries you want to focus on. In addition, how do you propose to do that, especially in relation to innovation and the tech sectors? Finally, how can we make sure our workforce is prepared to be qualified for these positions?

*Speaker Quinn:* First, I would like to keep all of them. One of the things we announced in the State of the City speech is a kind of neighborhood-based economic development policy plan. We are calling it Keeping Opportunities Close to Home (KOCH). We have seen under Mayor Bloomberg—and the Mayor deserves a lot of credit for this—things like the Hudson Yards re-zoning project. That kind of top-down economic development plan has generated a lot of jobs, and will create new neighborhoods and good economic development.

We also think you need to add a bottom-up approach in neighborhood development. What are the assets of our neighborhoods? What are the industries that are already out there with growth potential and that, as a government, we can help in order to facilitate that potential to go even further? I will give you a couple of examples. In Brooklyn, one of our great successes is the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It is a facility that had dwindled really into nothing, a remnant of the city's great past.<sup>19</sup> The Brooklyn Navy Yard has been amazingly successful: three thousand new manufacturing jobs were created there during the recession. Why? In part, a very interesting and creative managerial structure was developed in which the city foregoes getting money back from the Navy Yard and the money just cycles through the Navy Yard over and over and over.

We should look into what other neighborhoods have this potential. In Sunset Park, you have the Brooklyn Army Terminal. You have the Bush Terminal. You have the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal. We believe if we can put a similar focus and managerial structure in place at those terminals, we could bring two thousand new jobs to Sunset Park.

Staten Island's waterfront is another area of our city that has great potential just by definition of where it is and what it is. I was so gratified that we talked about this in

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19. I just found out recently that my father had been stationed at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. I asked him, "wasn't your ship serviced or built at the Brooklyn Navy Yard?" He said he was stationed there. I have been the Speaker for seven years and you think he could give me a good Brooklyn fact that I could have been using for a while. Apparently the war was over and he was stationed there briefly. He heard there were ships out of the Brooklyn Navy Yard and that people would get on ships and be dispatched to Europe. His ship went to Boston and then stopped there and he was in charge of shore patrol for a long time.

the State of the City address and President Obama talked about it on Tuesday in his State of the Union address.<sup>20</sup> New York City lags behind other cities in exporting.

Let's decide we are going to double our exports by 2020. Let's decide we are going to export out of Staten Island: create products in Brooklyn, take them to Staten Island, use Staten Island's ports to get them to other places. We should develop that potential in Staten Island; those are good jobs for people. Those are just two examples.

We should also seize the potential of the tech industry, right? The tech industry is a key part, not the only part, but a key part of what has brought DUMBO to what it is today.<sup>21</sup> We should take those back-office spaces in Downtown Brooklyn that we do not need for that use anymore and make them tech spaces. That is why we are working with New York University and the Polytechnic Institute of New York University on a study on how to create a Brooklyn Tech Triangle.

Do you know today, in downtown Brooklyn, there will be more students, college, and postgraduate students, than there will be in Cambridge, Massachusetts? We can be a tech triangle. We can be the college hub of America. We just need to seize the potential that is there and that we have never really focused on or harnessed. Those are some of the ways we can do it neighborhood by neighborhood.

What else can we do? Growing the tech sector, let's think of the potential of the Queens side of Roosevelt Island, or of those old factories, warehouses, and bases that are in Long Island City, and that other cities might tear down as vestiges of the past. We should instead turn them into tech incubators. We are already talking to an investor that I met in Jerusalem, Erel Margalit, about turning one of those spaces into just that.

Another industry example is health care. We have, still, vacancies in important health-care positions. The Council has been successful and helpful as it relates to home health aides and nurses, but there is more we can do.<sup>22</sup> And more significantly than that, with the changes at the federal and state levels around health care, new positions will be created that we, as a state, will have to define, create trainings for, and create accreditations for. We need to do that in a way that gets New Yorkers those jobs.

New York also has three thousand home health aides right now. All home health aides are going to have to be recertified. We have three thousand home health aides right now who are non-English-speaking, which is a great opportunity for clients who need a non-English-speaking home health aide. The tests that exist on the state and federal levels are only in English. Simply by committing to translating the test and the training material, we can make sure those three thousand New Yorkers do

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20. See President Barack Obama, State of the Union Address, 112th Cong., 2d Sess. (Jan. 24, 2012), available at <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/01/24/us/politics/state-of-the-union-2012-video-transcript.html>.

21. See Eli Rosenberg, *Tech Mate! DUMBO's Tech Incubators Hatch the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs*, BROOKLYN PAPER, Jan. 25, 2013, [http://www.brooklynpaper.com/stories/36/5/dtg\\_techhatchery\\_2013\\_01\\_25\\_bk.html](http://www.brooklynpaper.com/stories/36/5/dtg_techhatchery_2013_01_25_bk.html); see also Jefferson Graham, *Tech Start-Ups Flying High in Brooklyn's DUMBO Area*, USA TODAY, May 2, 2013, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/columnist/talkingtech/2013/05/02/new-york-tech-startup-scene/2127385/>.

22. The Council has funded two programs targeted at fulfilling nursing and home-care worker shortages. The first program was with the City University of New York to train nurses. The second program was with the Paraprofessional Health Institute to train home-care workers.



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not lose their jobs, as well as a countless number of other health-care jobs, which is why in the State of the City speech I announced a partnership with greater New York Hospital Association Local 1199 CUNY, which is being co-chaired by New York City Council Health Committee Chair Maria del Carmen-Arroyo, to begin that planning and implementation for New York City.

*Question:* You mentioned updating the building codes and I was just curious how you think that may affect currently landmarked buildings that are facing restoration and renovation due to damage from Hurricane Sandy?

*Speaker Quinn:* Most of the building code is going to apply to new construction, but there will obviously be requirements around rebuilding. Landmark issues always add a complicated overlay onto whatever these questions are. But, as with anything, there has to be a balance with the real challenges and dangers that we know exist for our buildings as a result of climate change. I am neither a building-code expert nor a landmarks expert, but that is exactly the kind of question that our Building Resiliency Task Force, which is comprised of those experts, is going to look at.

*Question:* My question is about congestion pricing. I want to thank you for your early and strong support in our last round. I was initially disappointed when the State Legislature did not have the courage to vote on April 7, 2008, to approve the congestion pricing legislation. But I am increasingly thankful they did not. That plan involved a very low level of pricing, similar to London, and we can now do a lot better than that, particularly with Global Positioning System (GPS) technology. What do you project for the next couple of years on the subject?

*Speaker Quinn:* I do not anticipate congestion pricing coming back around. It did not do well, and I don't expect that proposal to come back around in that way.

*Question:* You briefly discussed homelessness earlier in your speech. It is evident that it is a problem in New York and that there is a need for more shelters, centers, and education facilities. Currently in Carroll Gardens, they are trying to put a homeless shelter on Ninth Street with one hundred seventy-five homeless men in a condominium building that was built pre-recession and has ten apartments. This is an area where there are two schools about three blocks away. This homeless shelter is coming in through an emergency contract method. This process is very corrupt. You speak about the need for more transparency, and my question is regarding the issue of this emergency contract method of developing homeless shelters, the need for more transparency, and what we should do to overhaul this process.

*Speaker Quinn:* Well, let me back up a little bit, because I think the debate around homeless issues right now is mostly around the kind of issue you have raised dealing with shelters and emergency shelters and other sites for shelters. You hear it in your neighborhood; you hear it on the Upper West Side. I was with someone who recently



asked me if she should sell her apartment on the Upper West Side. I told her not to do that, obviously.

The real question is: Why are we not focusing on expanding exit opportunities out of homeless shelters? The facts are that we are at an all-time high in the homeless shelter population right now. In part, in my opinion and in the opinion of some of our leading and best advocates in this area, it is because there are no good exit opportunities.

We used to have a voucher program. There was debate about whether that was the best-structured program, but at least we had a voucher program that helped people go out and get apartments. Last year, in my State of the City speech, we proposed re-creating a voucher program that would give folks that exit opportunity. We pushed for it in the budget last year. We would have actually even funded it out of the Council side of the budget, but were unable to get that done.

There are big questions about transparency and about what is allowed under the emergency contract process. We are having a debate in my district about what is “two hundred beds,”<sup>23</sup> what isn’t “two hundred beds.” But the real issue is that we should not even have to have that conversation if we actually had a plan to get folks out of the shelter system and into housing.

Clearly, there are questions about how shelters are being sited. I see it in my own district, your neighborhood, and the Upper West Side. And this issue deserves greater clarity and more conversation. But we should not forget the heart of the issue. It is about getting folks out of the shelters so they can really start their lives, which is ultimately what we all want for homeless individuals and for everybody: for them to become a great part of Carroll Gardens, to become part of Chelsea, to be able to stay there and live in those neighborhoods.

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23. The issue of what it means to be “two hundred shelter beds” is central to the community and the New York City Council. The statement refers to the Bowery Residence Committee (BRC) shelter on West 25th Street in Chelsea. When BRC opened the shelter they touted it as a comprehensive center, filled with shelter beds, detox beds, and safe haven beds. In addition, ancillary services would be available at this location for the occupants of the 328 beds in the building. The community filed a lawsuit in 2011 to stop the shelter from opening by arguing that it (1) violated zoning regulations and (2) violated a local law limiting the size of shelters to two hundred beds. In July of 2011, the city argued, among other things, that (1) the proposed shelter was really three different shelters (homeless, safe haven, and detox), none of which was more than two hundred beds; (2) the local law was preempted by state law; and (3) the proposed shelter was permissible under the “Camp LaGuardia” exception. The Council intervened in the case to defend the validity of the local law and to ensure its proper application. The New York Supreme Court (Madden, J.) held that the shelter was 328 beds, but that it was permissible as a replacement for Camp LaGuardia (and that she therefore need not reach the preemption question). Chelsea Flatiron Coalition and the Council filed Notices of Appeal. *See* Chelsea Bus. & Prop. Owners’ Ass’n, LLC v. City of New York, No. 113194/10, 2011 N.Y. slip op. 32669(U) (Sup. Ct. N.Y. Cnty. Oct. 14, 2011).